

The happenings at Thurmond Lake

by Chrissey Westerberg, Park Ranger

There have been a lot of changes at Thurmond Lake. Over the winter, there were improvements to several campgrounds in order to continue to please our camping customers.

At Hawe Creek campground, located just a few miles west of McCormick, S.C., we are adding six new sites. A portion of the campground is currently closed for reservations while these sites are being constructed. The new sites will accommodate large RV's and are equipped with 100-amp electrical service. This campground will soon have a total of 34 sites available for camping reservations!

At Winfield campground, several sites have been refurbished with new crossties and screening. Underbrush has also been removed behind several sites for better views of the lake (and easier access too!)

Petersburg campground has more features that include sites that were completely renovated, with new crossties, screening and amenities. Some of these sites will also now have 100-amp electrical service!

Last but not least, Bussey Point primitive campground has four new sites near the boat ramp. These sites are open on a first-come-first-serve basis for all campers, and they were built with horseback riders in mind. Large impact sites were established for horse trailers, and tie lines were installed for horses. We also put in a primitive bathroom and a well with hand pump, both located near the new sites 11-14. The fee vault and bulletin board have been relocated to encompass all 14 sites, and they are now easily visible for camper registration and information.

If reading about all of these improvements is not enough, come see for yourself what camping with the Corps is all about! For more information, visit us online at www.sas.usace.army.mil/lakes/thurmond/camping.htm or call 1-800-533-3478. For reservations, please visit ReserveUSA.com or call 1-877-444-6777.

Campground openings

March 1: Broad River, Petersburg, Raysville, and Winfield.

April 1: Clay Hill, Mount Camel, Modoc, Ridge Rd., Big Hart, Hawe Creek, and Hester's Ferry.



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Keepin' Thurmond Lake clean

by David Quebedeaux, Park Ranger

People fortunate enough to live around Thurmond Lake recognize the beauty of the unspoiled natural shoreline. This collar of beautiful land surrounding the lake is the reason why so many people build a home directly adjacent to public property. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers must keep the public lands unmarred from the encroachment of personal items for all Americans today and tomorrow.

But what if the public shoreline were littered with orange swing sets, abandoned benches and tables, bright yellow trampolines, multicolored barbeque pits, and those little painted garden gnomes no taller than knee high? Would Thurmond Lake still be an attractive place to boat, play, or enjoy for its scenic beauty? Probably not.

Examine the fictional scenario of Mrs. Eunice Kitschmacher who lives in a house her husband built within view of Thurmond Lake. Although her husband Cletus Kitschmacher has died and her children have moved away, the grandkids often come to visit. "Grandma Kitschmacher" often jests that the grandkids visit was facilitated by the travel company with the "Traveling Gnome" commercials. Because the Kitschmacher grandkids have inherited the legendary Kitschmacher penchant for levity, they have gifted Grandma Kitschmacher with a different garden gnome each of the last seventeen times the have visited her lake house. Grandma



An example of how gnomes and an orange flower pot contribute to a cluttered shoreline.

Kitschmacher has lovingly placed each gnome near a tree on her property. As the little statuettes multiply, Grandma has began placing them one by one in whimsical ways all the way down to her permitted dock on public property.

Was Grandma Kitschmacher littering gnomes around the public property to intentionally violate her U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Shoreline Use Permit? Probably not. She thought her gnomes were cute and that she was the only person "gnoming" the shoreline. Unfortunately, almost every subdivision adjacent to Thurmond Lake's public property has at least one Grandma Kitschmacher. All these gnomes, or orange potted plants, and bright plastic playhouses, etc., on the shoreline tend to add up to a cluttered and unattractive shoreline. Corps of Engineers Rangers often must remind the owners of these personal property items that they are considered to be an encroachment and must be removed to private property.

The public land at Thurmond Lake is for all citizens to enjoy. Please help the Rangers preserve the natural beauty that attracts millions of visitors to the Thurmond Lake region each year. And please keep roaming gnomes at home.

Lakes conduct bald eagle and waterfowl survey

by Jeff Brooks, Wildlife Biologist at Lake Russell

According to a wildlife survey conducted by park rangers and biologists, waterfowl around the three Savannah District lakes increased 20 percent while the bald eagle total stayed the same in 2005.

A crew of seven park rangers and three biologists took boats and surveyed the shoreline, a crew of seven park rangers took vehicles to predetermined points around the lake, and a contractor flew the entire shoreline. The observations of eagles and waterfowl were recorded and sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state agencies as part of a nationwide eagle survey.

"Every year, around early to mid-January, the lakes conduct a mid-winter eagle survey," said Lori Brewster, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conservation biologist at Thurmond Lake.

As far as the bald eagle surveys, there were a total of 15 bald eagles observed at Thurmond; 10 adults and 5 juveniles. Many of these birds migrate but the number is similar to last year's total of 16 eagles. Nesting surveys will be conducted through the spring to determine how many eagles have established territories around Thurmond. Nest surveys provide a basis for comparing population changes from year to year.

"The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services are interested in the results because bald eagles are a threatened species and they are close to being de-listed," said Brewster.

Meanwhile, the bald eagle surveys at Richard B. Russell and Hartwell located one and four eagles, respectively. A new bald eagle nest was located below Hartwell dam this year.

Biologists and park rangers will make observations through the spring to determine if the new nest is successful.

Brewster said that the lakes provide good nesting because eagles like to nest around water.

Coots dominate the counts followed by Canada geese. Ducks are predominately diving ducks such as Ringneck and Bluebill followed by Bufflehead. Diving ducks are more common in "open" water and are capable of diving to feed. The numbers of dabbling ducks were much lower with Mallards and Wood ducks dominating the count. Dabbling ducks typically feed in shallow water (less than 18 inches deep), but will feed in deeper areas if aquatic vegetation is near the surface. Waterfowl counts at Russell and Hartwell are considerably lower than at Thurmond. This is due in part to size, but also at Thurmond there is more shallow water and aquatic vegetation. Hartwell rangers observed 482 ducks and 338 geese, whereas less than 100 waterfowl were observed at Russell on the lake. Russell does have one advantage; the approximately 30 acres of intensively managed waterfowl ponds. These three ponds witnessed several hundred to a thousand ducks on a good day.

The lack of aquatic vegetation is one factor that limits waterfowl habitat at the lakes. To improve waterfowl habitat at the lakes, rangers will continue to establish native aquatic vegetation.



Ducks on the managed waterfowl area at Lake Russell.

Take the headache out of permit renewal

by Pepper Shields, Park Ranger

Is it time for renewal of your Shoreline Use Permits? Permits are renewed once every five years for private adjacent property owners. When the time comes for renewal, it is necessary that you make an appointment with your area Ranger to meet with you on site to complete your renewal process.

Here are a few tips to help speed along the renewal process:

- inspect all of your permitted items and ensure that they are safe and well maintained.
- make sure dock structure, catwalks, flotation, decking, roofs, and all other items are safe, and in good condition.
- check your adjacent Corps property for personal items such as boat trailers, floats, lumber, billets, etc. and move these items to private property.

If you have a permit for a power line, have it inspected by a certified, licensed electrician and have the form filled out and signed before you make an appointment to meet with your area Shoreline Ranger. A copy of the form is mailed to all permittees having a power line, along with other appropriate forms, before renewal.

We hope these tips will be useful and will ensure a speedy renewal of your permit. If you need assistance, or have any questions, you may check our website, www.ssas.usace.army.mil/tsmp, or call our toll free number for more information: 1-800-533-3478.



Orange is for boundary lines

by Annette Carter, Park Ranger

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will continue to remark the government boundary line this winter. The Corps' contractor responsible for this work is Ferguson-Williams. Work began this fall near Baker Creek State Park, McCormick County, and will continue south through the Corps lands near Plum Branch, Parkville, Modoc, and Clarks Hill, South Carolina. The crews will mark the boundary line across the Savannah River into Georgia, working west on the south side of the Little River arm of the lake, ending in the Clarks Hill Wildlife Management Area in McDuffie County. The Corps hopes to remark more than 165 miles of boundary line before spring.

The crew will scrape old paint off the trees and apply fresh paint on "witness" trees to identify the boundary line. If the boundary survey pins are not visible, workers will dig where

the pins were placed to expose them. Trees and brush will be cut to clear the line.

The orange paint used to mark the boundary line on trees is normally a bright orange four inch band around half of each tree. To make the boundary line less obtrusive in adjacent subdivisions, the "witness" tree blaze width is reduced to two inches painted on one quarter of the tree.

Adjacent property owners are asked to move any personal property items on government property and return it to private property. Please control your pets so that they are not allowed unattended on public land, especially while workers are present. If you have concerns about the work adjacent to your property, call the lake office at 1-800-533-3478, then press 6.

ARE YOU A PENNY PINCHER?

by Jay Weidman, Park Ranger

Visitors coming into the J. Strom Thurmond Project Visitors Center have a wide variety of eye-catching, educational displays and exhibits available for their enjoyment. There are time lines showing the history of the region, the problems associated with living along the Savannah River, the frequent flooding that plagued the area, and the steps taken to dam the Savannah River to provide flood control, hydro power, and navigation benefits to the region.

Other exhibits explore the flora and fauna of the area, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers management practices designed to protect the regions diverse habitat, and showcase the lakes fabulous recreation potential. In this arena a large aquarium with some of the most popular local fish is the center of attention.



An example of what the "penny pincher" is capable of. It features a message, "Go Fishing."

Off in a corner sandwiched between the floods and construction is an illuminated wooden and glass box with a large metal handle, that once discovered, quickly eclipses the other exhibits. It's a "Penny Pincher", a hand cranked machine that turns pennies into shiny souvenirs. Visitors have three choices and by following the simple instructions can crank out a couple "pinched" pennies with different logos and water safety messages.

Rumor has it that some folks are making bracelets, pendants

and even fishing lures from their treasures and trying them out on the lakes fish! We supply the pennies, so even if you're Scrooge or a Jabez Stone, you can be a "Penny Pincher".